

NCN Displacement Committee Report

The NCN Displacement and Arson Committees held their first workshop on Jan. 19, 1980 at La Casa de Don Pedro-Lower Broadway Center. Over 60 community people attended and eleven staff people (Five NCN Staff, and Six La Casa Staff.)

La Casa staff worked hard to bring people out to the meeting. They distributed over 1,500 leaflets and used a system by which the people signed up ahead of time if they planned to attend. After signing up, people seemed to make a special effort to actually be at the workshop.

At the workshop, we made contacts with community people who are concerned about bad conditions in their neighborhoods. Discussions brought out that many people had the same housing problems, or faced the same shortage of city services. La Casa Staff presented information about their organization and the storefront; NCN staff presented information about our city-wide work and specifics about forces at work that cause displacement -- such as the St. Lucy's redevelopment site; CDEH acquisition; lack of re-location assistance; arson fires; withdrawal of city services. Jaimie of La Casa talked specifically about the right of first return that people have when re-development occurs in neighborhoods and how people have to fight for it by being organized.

The committee and staff people encouraged everyone present to speak on their specific problems so that individuals could see that they are not alone in their troubles. Along with our presentation we had visual and written materials to help the community people get a feel for us, about who we were and what we were doing.

Things that went well with the workshop: There was a large number of neighborhood people who attended, outreach was good; Outreach workers had people sign up ahead of time, turned out a good leaflet and lots of them; People stayed to the end -- for two hours, with translation; The people care about their area, want to work together to help themselves; The people will help spread the word about La Casa, NCN; the information presented was good; key contacts were made between staff and community people; a multi-racial group attended; it was a multi-racial staff presentation; discussion and recording comments went well; visual materials were good; people got a sense of the need to organize.

Things to be strengthened: The introduction needs to be tightened up, made clearer; we need to use an agenda, to give people a sense of the order in which things will be discussed, time lengths; We need to give materials to our translators ahead of time, learn how to work with them; Specific individuals should know exactly what to say when, to avoid repetition; a table should be set up near the door so people coming in will be sure to get written materials; provisions should be made for children -- either treats, or recreation; Next time bring a camera; simplify technical stuff; try to make the meeting shorter; all staff should be present ahead of time; consider finding a larger place.

Follow-up Meeting at La Casa: The displacement committee and NCN staff met with La Casa's storefront staff as soon as possible after the workshop (Tues. a.m.) to discuss specific strategies for following up the ideas that were discussed Saturday. It was agreed that NCN committees and staff would focus on follow-up

research regarding specific cases and that La Casa staff would arrange for follow-up meetings. In line with La Casa's long term organizing strategy, we decided to plan a meeting one-month from the last workshop -- An area-wide meeting for all people north of Stone street to Clifton between Sixth Avenue and Park. Set for February 16. Prior to that NCN and La Casa staff will meet with people in specific buildings and on specific blocks to address their complaints and concerns --- these meetings will be held in two-weeks and be used to follow-up the first workshop, lead into the second. During the second workshop we hope to focus on organization building by getting people to work on right to return to St. Lucy's, problems with city services, arson, possibilities for housing rehab.

The work of the past two weeks shows possibilities for cooperation between NCN member groups and NCN Staff that can lead to neighborhood and city-wide organization building, increased awareness of issues, and connections among people.